

Monmouth County Library Commission Minutes  
May 12, 2020  
Audio Conference

**Present:** Chairperson Frank Wells and Commissioners Brian Boms, Nancy Grbelja, Barbara McMorrow, and Mary Ann Musich; also present Freeholder Lillian Burry, Director Judi Tolchin, and Assistant Director Heidi Amici

**Absent:** N/A

**Guests:** Meghan Bennett, Special Counsel; Muriel Smith, Publicity Consultant

**The meeting convened at 11:04 am.**

Everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Director Judi Tolchin opened the meeting of Tuesday, May 12, 2020 with the following statement:

“The Library Commission has complied with the regular requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act by giving written notice to the Press and County Clerk’s Office and by posting on the Library web page the date, time, and place of the meeting. Additionally, instructions for the virtual meeting were posted on the Library’s webpage.”

**Minutes**

Director Judi Tolchin gave a few minutes for review of the meeting minutes from April 14, 2020. Opportunity was given for additions, corrections, and suggestions. There is a correction to the year to date spending, as of March 30, 2020 in the amount of \$2,238,539.02 including encumbered amounts.

**A Motion to approve the open public meeting minutes of April 14, 2020 was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously Approved.**

**Library Liaison Report**

Freeholder Lillian Burry commended the library for how it has been adapting during this time and extended a thank you to everyone. Additionally, she praised the postcard that was sent by the library to members of the community highlighting electronic services.

Freeholder Burry has maintained contact with Franco Minnervini, Sculpture Artist. At this time, the installation of the sculpture is scheduled for the week of June 8, 2020 and Director Tolchin is awaiting further confirmation of the specific date. Freeholder Burry inquired about the sculpture dedication event. Holding an event would be contingent upon the standing Executive Orders in the State of New Jersey and how libraries are permitted to operate. Freeholder Burry suggested continuing to plan for the event so preparations are in place when an event can be held.

Freeholder Burry inquired about the purchase order for plexiglass shields. Director Tolchin stated the order has been submitted and the first portion of the order has been received. A secondary vendor will be used for the remaining balance of the order.

Freeholder Burry inquired about the van purchase. Assistant Director Amici will continue to work with the County to finalize this purchase.

Freeholder Burry inquired about the canopy project at the Eastern Branch. The project was originally approved in 2019 as a capital project in the amount of \$26,000.00. A plan has not been established and the County Engineering Department is now aware of this oversight. An additional capital appropriation may be needed for the construction of the canopy. Director Tolchin will maintain contact with the County Engineering Department regarding this project.

### **Chairperson Remarks**

Chairperson Frank Wells stated it has been a pleasure to see how the library has been providing services online. He extended a congratulations on a job well done to all staff and encouraged everyone to remain safe and healthy.

Chairperson Wells reiterated maintaining contact with the County regarding the canopy project.

### **New Jersey State Public Library Construction Bond Act and Headquarters Renovation – Project Status**

#### **Application Update**

Director Judi Tolchin stated the community analysis portion of the application is under review by the architect. A response from the architect is anticipated within a few days. A meeting is scheduled with Monmouth County Administration for Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup> to discuss final points for the application. Donna Mansfield, Grant Writer has provided a list of aspects to be addressed prior to the application completion. The application due date is June 5<sup>th</sup>. The library is prepared to submit the grant application by the due date.

#### **Evaluation Rubric – Branch Library Applications**

The evaluation rubric will be used to prioritize the applications for the Monmouth County Library Headquarters, Marlboro branch, and Wall Township branch. Commissioner Barbara McMorrow volunteered to take part in the evaluation committee. Director Tolchin will provide Commissioner McMorrow with the evaluation rubric prior to reviewing applications.

The grant application will require the Chairperson to execute exhibit C, a certification of statements for the New Jersey State Public Library Construction Bond Act. Special Counsel Meghan Bennett will need to attest to the signature.

**A Motion to authorize Chairperson Frank Wells to sign Exhibit C of the New Jersey State Public Library Construction Bond Act grant application and any other documents to support the application was made by Barbara McMorrow and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously approved.**

Director Judi Tolchin stated \$1,762,242.00 remains in the capital account for the renovation project. She is requesting permission to use \$187,258.00 from the operating budget to meet the

balance of the required matching fund amount. These funds will be available in the furnishings budget and from funds saved in overtime, seasonal employment, and monitors due to the library's continued closure due to COVID-19.

**A Motion to authorize the amount of \$187,258 from the operating budget to support matching funds necessary for the New Jersey State Public Library Construction Bond Act was made by Mary Ann Musich and seconded by Frank Wells. Unanimously approved.**

### **Eastern Branch ADA Renovations – Project Status**

#### **ADA Ramp, Sculpture, and Canopy**

Director Judi Tolchin stated the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) ramp is near completion. This project is managed by Monmouth County Engineering.

At this time, the sculpture is still scheduled for installation during the week of June 8<sup>th</sup>. An update is expected from Helen Fiore, Monmouth County Director of Purchasing if the contractor is still able to perform the installation on the date planned. Franco Minnervini, Sculpture Artist will also need to be present to supervise the installation.

Director Tolchin will maintain contact with the Monmouth County Engineering Department regarding the canopy project.

### **Financial Report**

#### **April Financials - Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, and Capital Budgets**

Director Judi Tolchin submitted the April 2020 Financial Report to the Commission, including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, and Capital Budgets wherein the 2020 detail budget account charged year to date is \$3,619,599.40 posted to the actual budget of \$17,485,000.00. This total includes encumbered amounts, largely for architectural services, books, video sound equipment approved by the Commission for the Eastern Branch. It should be noted that there are funds being returned for program cancellations. The 2019 reserve budget includes \$601,089.28 remaining unencumbered. The remaining capital account for the renovation is \$60,486.02 unencumbered from the first capital appropriation of \$977,000 and \$1,485,770.84 unencumbered from the second capital appropriation of \$1,497,000.00 for a total of \$1,546,256.86 remaining unencumbered as of April 30, 2020. These funds are reserved for the completion of the adult library and the lobby, including lobby furniture. The Capital Account for the Eastern Branch ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) ramp was included in the summary for informative purposes only, as the project is not managed by the library. The reports are submitted into the meeting record for Commission approval.

**A Motion to approve the April 2020 Financial Report including the Detail Budget, Check Writing, Reserve Budget, and Capital Budgets was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Nancy Grbelja. Unanimously approved.**

#### **Indirect Voucher Details**

Director Tolchin provided the Commission with further details of the indirect charges, as requested. If the Commission has any additional questions, Director Tolchin would be happy to forward them to Craig Marshall, Monmouth County Director of Finance for further information.

#### Fringe Vouchers – Quarter 4 (2019) & Quarter 1 (2020)

The fringe benefit voucher for Quarter 4 of 2019 was processed and posted to the reserve budget in the amount of \$729,136.03. The fringe benefit voucher for Quarter 1 of 2020 was processed and posted to the budget in the amount of \$750,396.12. These vouchers were brought forward by the County of Monmouth without prior Commission authorization, but the amounts had been approved within the 2019 and 2020 budgets.

#### Tax Levy by Member Municipality

Director Tolchin provided the Commission a summary of the tax levy by member municipality from 2017 through 2019 with an additional estimation for 2020. The actual amounts will be calculated by the County of Monmouth according to the 2020 equalized valuation of property.

#### Re-opening Plan

The library is considering various options while developing a tentative re-opening plan. Some potential options include re-opening in phases, with opening select branches, and having staff return first. Considerations are being made to begin by opening the Headquarters and Eastern Branch locations first, as the proper cleaning can be better ensured at these locations. Townships will be responsible for the cleaning of the branch locations as they maintain their Township's buildings. Director Tolchin is developing a letter to be sent to the municipalities inquiring about their individual plans and procedures regarding re-opening. The plan will account for opening book drops, limiting staff, and curbside pickup. The library will continue to stream programs on social media platforms and through WebEx. Acrylic protective shields with pass-through openings and face shields have been ordered. Staff will initially be required to wear masks while working. If the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to recommend the wearing of masks, then signage alerting patrons of this recommendation may be considered. Additional emergency supplies may need to be purchased and Director Tolchin will continue to coordinate with Chairperson Wells if the amount of the supplies exceeds the \$10,000.00 threshold and notify the Commission accordingly. Due dates for all materials currently checked out of the libraries has been extend through June 1, 2020; with an additional extension through July 1, 2020 if or when necessary. No fines will accrue as a result of the library's closure. Book drops will remain closed and no materials should be returned at this time. Once the library allows the returning of materials, items will be quarantined for a three-day period before processing. Additional receptacles may be needed to store quarantined materials. The wiping down of materials is not recommended by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

Director Tolchin requested approval for an amnesty period for materials that were overdue prior to the COVID-19 closure. Fine and photocopy revenue is factored into the annual budget in the amount of \$195,000.00. It is anticipated this estimated amount will not be reached.

**A motion to approve an amnesty period through August 2020 was made by Frank Wells and seconded by Barbara McMorow. Unanimously approved.**

There has been a significant increase in the use of e-books, online streaming, and use of online resources. The month of April produced an increase of 2,000 circulations per week. In April 2019, the library had approximately 24,000 e-book circulations and in April 2020 the library has reached 37,741 e-book circulations. The library's vast e-collection and online resources has

allowed us to continue to serve patrons during the current closure. E-materials will be prioritized over physical materials for the foreseeable future.

The majority of staff members continue to work remotely from home. The library is looking into hotspot modems to assist staff members without internet access to work from home. Virtual services continue to serve patrons through phone, email, and chat. From March 17, 2020 through May 11, 2020, the library has served 1,554 patrons by phone, 982 patrons by email, and 524 patrons by chat for a total of 3,060 reference assistance interactions. A plan for re-opening is still in development.

### **Programming Plan – Virtual Online Streaming**

In-person programs and in-person meetings are anticipated to be suspended for the foreseeable future. The library will evaluate month-by-month based on recommendations from the New Jersey State Library, the New Jersey Library Association, LibraryLink New Jersey, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Director Tolchin will present all recommendations to the Commission for their consideration. The library is hopeful that public meetings and public programs for ten persons or less can resume in the near future.

AARP is evaluating how they may continue to serve patrons with tax return assistance. Director Tolchin encourages any services they may offer and will offer any support they may need to continue to provide income tax preparation services to patrons.

The library is continuing to evaluate the web-platforms of Zoom and WebEx to determine the best practices for online programming. The Programming Department is working with virtual performers to establish virtual performer agreements and associated procedures. Currently, the library purchases public performance movie licenses for branches and members that costs approximately \$11,000.00 annually for movie licensing. The library is carefully evaluating if the movie licenses are needed if public programs cannot be offered at library locations.

### **Director's Report**

Director Judi Tolchin thanked Freeholder Burry for the proclamation from the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders in honor of National Library Week.

The library currently has twenty-three staff vacancies and some temporary staff being considered for permanent positions.

Director Tolchin and Assistant Director Amici along with Commissioner Boms attended a meeting with the Sea Bright Township governing body. Director Tolchin presented on the values and benefits offered by being a member of the Monmouth County Library system. The Sea Bright Administrator extended a thank you for the library's attendance at their meeting.

Howell Township is considering alternative locations for their Township's library building. A meeting is scheduled for today with Director Tolchin, Assistant Director Amici, and Beth Henderson, Howell Branch Manager in attendance to view the perspective location.

Director Tolchin provided the Commission with a draft of a letter to Sea Girt residents informing them of their change in status to non-member, effective January 1, 2021. Sea Girt residents will

be eligible to obtain a paid borrower card at that time. A suggestion was made to use bold type font for the portion of the letter stating Sea Girt will no longer be a member of the Monmouth County Library system effective January 1, 2021.

Two vacancies still remain on the Monmouth County Library Commission.

### **Assistant Director's Update**

Assistant Director Heidi Amici stated she is hopeful to have further information regarding the van purchase at the next scheduled meeting.

A thank you was extended to Monmouth County ITS for adding the library to the WebEx license. Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator and the Programming Department are using the service to provide some programming. They are working on adding online book clubs to the service. Additionally, at 1:45 pm Monday through Friday the library hosts a story time and craft event on our YouTube channel.

A member meeting was held this past month with almost all member librarians in attendance. Additionally, all children's librarians have maintained regular contact with the member libraries they serve. Protective shields are being purchased for member libraries with some locations currently offering curbside pick-up.

The library is working with book purchasing vendors to reroute book deliveries to the Monmouth County Library Extension in an effort to minimize the back-log of books that have been ordered. Books will then be sent through internal delivery to the branches and members.

Assistant Director Amici continues to work on the database access card pilot project for students in the Allentown and Freehold Regional school districts. Barcodes have been purchased to begin creating this type of card.

### **Publicity Consultant Report**

Director Tolchin thanked Chairperson Frank Wells and Publicity Consultant Muriel Smith for the editorial they wrote about the library. Articles about the library have appeared in the Monmouth Journal, the Two River Times, and other local greater media papers.

Publicity Consultant Muriel Smith complimented the postcard that was mailed to County residents highlighting library services.

A thank you was extended to Laura Migliore, Programming Coordinator for her assistance and the information she has provided regarding what the library is currently working on.

Muriel Smith would like to contact Director Tolchin and Assistant Director Amici for additional information for a story on how patrons should be handling their library books at this time and what to do with them when the library re-opens. She would also like to write a story about the increase in online usage.

### **Closed Executive Session**

A closed executive session was not held during the course of the meeting.

### **Commissioner Comments**

Freeholder Burry requested Director Tolchin submit some library statistics so that they may be reported at the next scheduled Board of Chosen Freeholders meeting on Thursday, May 14, 2020.

Vice Chairperson Nancy Grbelja commended Director Tolchin, Assistant Director Amici, and all staff for their hard work and the tremendous job being done to continue services. Additionally, Commissioner Barbara McMorrow commended the technology efforts made to keep people engaged.

### **Public Comments**

**A Motion to open the meeting to public comment was made by Brian Boms and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously Approved.**

Library staff member and Union President Mariem Mahmoud introduced herself to the Commission. Ms. Mahmoud submitted a verbal request the Union be invited to participate in re-opening discussion and planning to ensure staff concerns are represented and met in a realistic way. The Union strongly believes in working together.

**A Motion to close the meeting to public comment was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously Approved.**

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 11:00 am.

### **Scheduling of Closed Executive Session at Next Meeting**

**A Motion to schedule a Closed Executive Session at the next meeting on Tuesday, June 16, 2020 was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Brian Boms. Unanimously approved.**

### **Adjournment**

**A Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Nancy Grbelja and seconded by Barbara McMorrow. Unanimously approved.**

The meeting concluded at 12:23 pm.

Submitted by Kimberly Conover